

# Canoeing on the Obed-Emory Rivers System

## General Information

The Obed River and its two major tributaries, Daddys Creek and Clear Creek, have their beginnings on Tennessee's Cumberland Plateau. After being joined by Daddys Creek and Clear Creek, the flow of the Obed proceeds generally east where it is joined by the much smaller Emory, turns south and joins the Clinch River and Watts Bar Lake at Kingston.

The Obed-Emory system offers varied types of stream paddling—from placid and serene float trips at the headwaters to exciting whitewater in the middle sections. The most popular trips and the most frequently used access points are shown in the table following the description of each stream.

Stream descriptions also include stream gradient, difficulty, and other information that should be helpful to the river traveler. Gradient is given in feet of river drop per mile. Five feet/mile is a gentle gradient, while a gradient of 25 feet/mile can produce rapids up to a difficulty rating of Class III.

The guidebooks listed below describe the streams in this brochure in more detail.

*A Canoeing and Kayaking Guide to the Streams of Tennessee*, Vol. II, by Bob Sehlinger and Bob Lantz, Menasha Ridge Press, Hillsborough, North Carolina 27278.

*The Obed-Emory Watershed*, by Monte D. Smith, Rocker Associates, Nashville, Tennessee 37212.

*Tennessee Whitewater*, by Mike Mayfield, Southeastern Brochure and Book Press, Knoxville, Tennessee 37917.

## Access

In 1976 approximately 24 miles of the Obed, 17 miles of Clear Creek, 2 miles of Daddys Creek, and 1 mile of the Emory became part of the National Wild and Scenic River system. The National Park Service manages the Obed Wild and Scenic River jointly with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA). TWRA is responsible for those parts of the system that flow through the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area.

TVA, in cooperation with Federal, State, and local governments, is acquiring and developing public access to some of the more popular streams in the Tennessee Valley. Several access sites on the Obed-Emory system are in public ownership but still undeveloped. A few of the more popular sites are still in private ownership, and access is only at bridge crossings on highway rights-of-way. At bridge crossings or other areas not shown as public access, please ask neighboring landowners for permission to park vehicles. If you plan to camp along any of the streams outside Catoosa, there is a very good chance your campsite will be on private land, so please obtain permission from landowners to camp or cross their land.

Access to the parts of Daddys Creek and the Obed in the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area is closed to visitors from January through March to reduce the impact on roads. Catoosa is also closed to all except hunters during managed hunts in the spring and fall.

Additional information on the Obed Wild and Scenic River and the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area may be obtained from:

Superintendent  
Obed Wild and Scenic River  
Post Office Drawer 630  
Oneida, Tennessee 37841

Manager  
Catoosa Wildlife Management Area  
216 East Penfield Street  
Crossville, Tennessee 38555

## Map

TVA's map of the Emory River watershed or the 1/250,000 USGS Chattanooga and Corbin quadrangles give a good overall view of the system. Topographic maps (scale 1 inch = 2,000 feet) provide detailed information for locating county roads, bridges, and other points of interest. These maps may be ordered from TVA Map Information and Records Unit, Mapping Services Branch, 100 Haney Building, Chattanooga, Tennessee 37401 or

TVA Map Sales, 400 West Summit Hill Drive, Knoxville, Tennessee 37902. The appropriate topographic maps are included in the description of each stream segment. County highway maps are also useful and are usually available at the county courthouse.

The area location map on the reverse side provides general location of the streams and access points described in this brochure.

## Stream Difficulty Classification

The stream difficulty ratings shown for each stream segment in the tables are based on the optimum streamflow conditions. Difficulty ratings can increase with increased flows. Difficulty classifications are based upon the International Scale of River Difficulty adopted by the International Canoe Federation in 1954 and range from Class I through Class VI. The higher the numerical classification, the more difficult and dangerous the stretch of water.

**Class I**—Moving water with a few riffles and small waves. Few or no obstructions.

**Class II**—Easy rapids with waves up to 3 feet high and wide clear channels that are obvious without scouting. Some maneuvering is required.

**Class III**—Rapids with high irregular waves often capable of swamping an open canoe. Narrow passages that often require complex maneuvering. May require scouting from shore.

**Class IV**—Long difficult rapids with constricted passages that often require precise maneuvering in very turbulent waters. Scouting from shore is often necessary and conditions make rescue difficult. Boaters in decked canoes and kayaks should be able to Eskimo roll.

**Class V**—Extremely difficult, long, and very violent rapids with highly congested routes that nearly always must be scouted from shore. Rescue conditions are difficult, and there is significant hazard to life in the event of mishap. Ability to Eskimo roll is essential for canoes and kayaks.

**Class VI**—Difficulties of Class V carried to the extreme of navigability. Nearly impossible and very dangerous. For teams of experts only after close study and with all precautions taken.

## Stream Gauge Readings

All streamflows listed refer to readings of the gauge on the Emory at Oakdale, Tennessee, and not the actual flow in that particular stream section being described. Current readings are available from the Oakdale gauge by calling the TVA Citizen Action Line (CAL). The CAL is open from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays, and 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Saturday (eastern time). You may call toll-free 1-800-362-9250 (Tennessee) and 1-800-251-9242 (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, and Virginia). The CAL may also be reached by calling (615) 632-4100 (not toll-free). Flow information is updated daily, Monday through Saturday, at 11:00 a.m. (eastern time).

## Safety

The importance of river safety cannot be overemphasized. Moving water presents hazards with which the paddler should be familiar. A few important safety rules are:

1. Have an honest knowledge of your ability,
2. Always wear a lifejacket,
3. Be a competent swimmer with the ability to handle yourself under water,
4. Be aware of river hazards and know how to avoid them
5. Never boat alone—there should be a minimum of three craft,
6. Wear proper clothing and carry a change of dry clothes,
7. Know what to do in case of an upset, and
8. Stay off streams in flood.

## River Descriptions

### Daddys Creek

*Grassy Cove Quadrangle* (117-SW). The uppermost put-in is at the U.S. 127 bridge near Big Lick. The stream meanders its way to Linary. SUTTON DAM near Linary REQUIRES PORTAGING. The average gradient between Big Lick and State Route 68

(Meridian Bridge) is 21 ft./mile, a rocky course with rapids up to Class II. The distance from Big Lick to Meridian Bridge is 13 miles.

*Dorton Quadrangle* (117-NW). The distance from Meridian Bridge to U.S. 70 is 5½ miles. The gradient is 4-5 ft./mile. Long pools are broken occasionally by small shoals. The 5 miles between U.S. 70 and Center Bridge, north of Crab Orchard, have a gradient of 10 ft./mile. There are Class I rapids about 3 miles above Center Bridge.

*Ozone Quadrangle* (117-NE). The 9 miles from Center Bridge to Antioch Bridge contain Class I rapids in the first portion. The last 3 miles have a 20 ft./mile gradient with some Class II rapids.

*Hebbertsburg Quadrangle* (116-SE). The most difficult run on Daddys Creek begins at Antioch Bridge and ends at the low bridge at the Devil's Breakfast Table in the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area. Below Antioch Bridge, there is no easy access to the canyon except for a steep foot trail from the mouth of Yellow Creek.

The gradient is 34-40 ft./mile from Antioch Bridge to Yellow Creek junction with rapids to Class III. Below Yellow Creek, the gorge narrows and the pitch increases to 64 ft./mile with stretches up to 100 ft./mile. Large boulders and steep complex rapids create Class IV-V rapids. This 7-mile-long stretch is for experts only. Portages are rather difficult because of the large boulders lining the streambank.

From the Devil's Breakfast Table to the junction with the Obed, the course eases to a gradient of 24 ft./mile with some interesting Class III rapids.

Below the junction of Daddys Creek with the Obed (Obed Junction), there is a jeep road on the north bank of the Obed. There are hiking trails down both sides of Daddys Creek to its junction with the Obed.

Oakdale Stream Gauge Readings for Canoeing Daddys Creek

River Section	Trip Length (miles)	Stream Difficulty	Minimum (cfs)	Optimum (cfs)
U.S. 127 Bridge at Big Lick—Linary	5	I	1500	2-5000
Linary—Tennessee Highway 68 (Meridian Bridge)	8	I-II	1500	2-5000
Tennessee Highway 68—U.S. 70 Bridge	6	I	1500	2-5000
U.S. 70 Bridge—Center Bridge	4	I	1200	2-5000
Center Bridge—Antioch Bridge	8	I-II	800	2000
Antioch Bridge—Devil's Breakfast Table	7	III-IV(V)	500	1-2500

## Clear Creek

*Isoline* (108-SE), *Jones Knob* (116-NW), and *Twin Bridges* (116-NE) *Quadrangles*. The access for the upper part of Clear Creek is at the bridge on U.S. 127 between Jamestown and Crossville near Clarkrange. From here there is no road access to the gorge for 20 miles. The next road crossing is at Barnett Bridge (Waltman Ford),

The creek is small and rocky with a gradient of 18 ft./mile and Class I-III rapids. Along the way, there are numerous rock houses, and some of the entering side streams have waterfalls. About half a mile above Barnett Bridge, there is a drop hidden by a sharp right turn and large rocks.

*Twin Bridges* (116-NE) and *Hebbertsburg* (116-SE) *Quadrangles*. At Barnett Bridge, White Creek joins Clear Creek on the left. The road to the bridge is steep on both approaches and may be impassable to all but 4-wheel-drive vehicles in wet weather. Below White Creek, the gradient is 16 ft./mile with Class I-II rapids in the 4½ miles to Jett Bridge on Genesis Road (State Route 298).

*Lancing Quadrangle* (122-SW). From Jett Bridge to Lilly Bridge, the gradient increases to 23 ft./mile with frequent Class II-III rapids. The distance is 2½ miles. The steepest gradient, 53 ft./mile, appears in the 1½ miles from Lilly Bridge to the confluence of Clear Creek with the Obed. This gives Class II-IV rapids. Beginning about half a mile below Lilly Bridge, there are three rapids in succession that should be scouted, Jack's Rock, Camel Rock, and Wooten's Folly.

At the junction of Clear Creek with the Obed, a trail leads from the right bank to the rim of the gorge.

Oakdale Stream Gauge Readings for Canoeing Clear Creek

River Section	Trip Length (miles)	Stream Difficulty	Minimum (cfs)	Optimum (cfs)
U.S. 127 Bridge—Barnett Bridge	20	I-III	1500	2-5000
Barnett Bridge—Jeff Bridge	5	I-II	1000	1500-3000
Jeff Bridge—Lilly Bridge	2½	II-III	500	750-1500
Lilly Bridge—Obed River	1½	II-IV	1000	2-3000

## White Creek

*Twin Bridges (116-NE) and Hebbertsburg (116-SE) Quadrangles.* White Creek is the largest tributary of Clear Creek and is boatable after adequate rainfall.

Starting at Twin Bridges, there is a 3-mile run to Lavender Bridge, then an additional 4 miles to Clear Creek at Barnett Bridge. The gradient is about 20 ft./mile with Class I-II rapids.

Oakdale Stream Gauge Readings for Canoeing White Creek

River Section	Trip Length (miles)	Stream Difficulty	Minimum (cfs)	Optimum (cfs)
Twin Bridges—Lavender Bridge	3	I-II	2000	3-4000
Lavender Bridge—Barnett Bridge	4	I-II	2000	3-4000

## Obed

*Crossville Quadrangle (109-NE).* The Obed emerges from Lake Holiday near Crossville and passes under U.S. 70 S. From there it flows under Bishop Bridge on U.S. 127 north of Crossville. Over this distance, the Obed is a small meandering creek with little gradient.

*Isoline Quadrangle (108-SE).* From U.S. 127, the next road access is Adams Bridge on Genesis Road (State Route 298), a distance of 10 river miles. The gradient is unevenly distributed over these 10 miles. The first 2 miles have a 12-15 ft./mile gradient producing Class I-II rapids, the next mile has a gradient of over 60 ft./mile, and the following 2 miles, including Gould's Bend, drop more than 70 ft./mile. There is a half-mile stretch with a gradient of 100 ft./mile. These gradients produce rapids to Class IV and Class V depending upon flow. This is the steepest section of the Obed. The river is very narrow and strewn with large boulders, and the drops are steep and twisting. The only other access to the gorge is by foot.

*Fox Creek Quadrangle (116-SW).* After Gould's Bend, the gradient eases to 20 ft./mile with pleasant Class I-II rapids.

Below Adams Bridge, the gradient is 10 ft./mile to Potter Ford Bridge in the Catoosa Wildlife Management Area. There is a steep, 1-mile section of this 4¼-mile distance, however. The rapids in this 1-mile section are narrow, twisting drops strewn with boulders. There is a rudimentary trail from Adams Bridge to Potter Ford Bridge.

*Hebbertsburg Quadrangle (116-SE).* Beyond Potter Ford Bridge, the gradient increases to 20 ft./mile; the rapids are Class I-II, but some are rather steep. The distance to lower Potter Ford is 10 miles. There is no road access at lower Potter Ford, only a foot trail.

The next section to the junction with Daddys Creek (Obed Junction) is 4 miles. Here the Obed doubles in size.

The 4½ miles from Obed Junction to the junction with Clear Creek are characterized by short, steep, twisting drops (Class II-IV) followed by short pools. At higher flows, these pools are very short indeed! The average gradient is 30 ft./mile.

*Lancing Quadrangle (122-SW).* With the addition of the flow from Clear Creek, the size of the Obed increases markedly. After a half mile of Class II-III rapids, there is a long pool known as "Canoe Hole." On the left bank of this pool, there is a steep trail to the top of the gorge. It should be mentioned that roads leading to civilization are more easily found from the left bank, particularly below Adams Bridge. For the next 2 miles, there is a series of Class I-III rapids. From the end of these rapids to the junction with the Emory, the river is rather quiet.

Along these quiet stretches, there are trails from the left bank to the top of the gorge; in particular, the one at Alley Ford is used by fishermen. The junction with the Emory is easily seen because of strip

mining activities, the railroad, and the turn of the river sharply toward the southwest.

Oakdale Stream Gauge Readings for Canoeing on Obed River

River Section	Trip Length (miles)	Stream Difficulty	Minimum (cfs)	Optimum (cfs)
U.S. 127 Bridge—Adams Bridge	10	I-IV	1500	2-5000
Adams Bridge—Potter Ford Bridge	4	I-IV	1000	2-5000
Potter Ford Bridge—Daddys Creek Jct.	11	I-III	800	1-2000
Daddys Creek Jct.—Nemo Bridge	9	I-IV	300	2000

## Emory

*Gobey Quadrangle (122-NE).* The Emory rises at the foot of mountains at the deserted mining town of Mahan northwest of Wartburg. For the first few miles, the river is very small and is barely large enough to boat even when the flow is high. The headwater system is small, and runoff is very fast. The upper portion of the river runs down a rather unattractive mountain valley filled with roads, a deserted railroad, the remains of mining activity, and deserted farms and houses. The first few miles have rapids to Class II. The stream then becomes sluggish with brushy banks.

*Lancing Quadrangle (122-SW).* The stream flows beneath U.S. 27, and 1½ miles further downstream, it is crossed by a county road bridge. From here to the confluence with the Obed, the overall gradient is about 23 ft./mile. However, the last 1½ miles drop a total of almost 70 feet. Difficulty is Class II-III.

Below the junction with the Obed, there is a succession of small Class I-II rapids with a gradient of 10 ft./mile. One mile below the junction with the Obed, Nemo Bridge spans the river. This bridge is on the Wartburg-Catoosa Wildlife Management Area road. Below the bridge, the river turns sharply left into a Class II-III rapid, Nemo Rapid.

*Camp Austin Quadrangle (122-SE).* Between Nemo Rapid and the junction with Crooked Fork Creek (left side), there are several Class II rapids. The distance is 4 miles. Two miles beyond Crooked Fork Creek, Camp Austin Bridge crosses the Emory. Below this bridge is a Class II rapid. Approximately ¼ mile below the bridge, Crab Orchard Creek enters on the right. Crooked Fork Creek, after sufficient rain, offers one of the most difficult and demanding runs on the Obed-Emory system. Crab Orchard Creek has excellent scenery and nonstop Class II-III whitewater.

The Emory becomes quiet with long pools as Oakdale is approached. Below Oakdale Bridge, the gradient decreases to 5 ft./mile. There are mild rapids all the way to Harriman on the backwaters of Watts Bar Lake.

The Emory is the only stream in the system that is turbid and silted from agricultural and strip mine runoff. However, below its junction with the Obed, this effect is not quite so bad because of the much larger volume of water contributed by the Obed.

Oakdale Stream Gauge Readings for Canoeing on Emory River

River Section	Trip Length (miles)	Stream Difficulty	Minimum (cfs)	Optimum (cfs)
Road near Macedonia Church—Gobey Bridge	7	I	2000	3-6000
Gobey Bridge—U.S. 27	4	I	2000	3-6000
U.S. 27 Bridge—Nemo Bridge	8	I-III	2000	3-6000
Nemo Bridge—Camp Austin Bridge	6	II-III	300	600-1000
Camp Austin—Oakdale Bridge	3	I-II	300	600-1000
Oakdale Bridge—Tennessee Highway 61 in Harriman	4	I-II	300	600-1000

## Crab Orchard Creek

*Cardiff (123-NW), Lancing (122-SW), and Camp Austin (122-SE) Quadrangles.* The access for the full 10½-mile distance on Crab Orchard Creek is at Flat Rock Ford located off the Oakdale-Rockwood road (State Route 299). The first ½ to ¾ mile is quite calm—just smoothly flowing water. Then come Class I rapids and soon Class II rapids appear. The Class I and III rapids then become almost continuous. The gradient over the entire run is only slightly over 40 ft./mile with stretches approaching 70 ft./mile. There is a second bridge crossing at White Oak that is about 3 miles above the confluence with the Emory. The last 3 miles of the trip are on the Emory with the takeout at Oakdale.

Oakdale Stream Gauge Readings for Canoeing Crab Orchard Creek

River Section	Trip Length (miles)	Stream Difficulty	Minimum (cfs)	Optimum (cfs)
Flat Rock Ford—Bridge at White Oak	7½	I-III(IV)	5000	8000
Bridge at White Oak—Emory River	3	III	5000	8000

Location of Public Access Areas

### Daddys Creek

1. Meridian Bridge—TVA  
Right bank, downstream of bridge
2. U.S. 70 Highway Bridge—TVA  
Right bank, upstream of bridge
3. Center Bridge—TVA  
Left bank, downstream of bridge

### Obed River

1. Adams Bridge—TVA  
Right bank, upstream of bridge
2. Potters Ford  
Catoosa WMA

### Emory River

1. Nemo Bridge—National Park Service  
Left bank, upstream of bridge

### Island Creek

1. Catoosa WMA

### Crab Orchard Creek

1. Flat Rock Ford—TVA  
Left bank, downstream of bridge

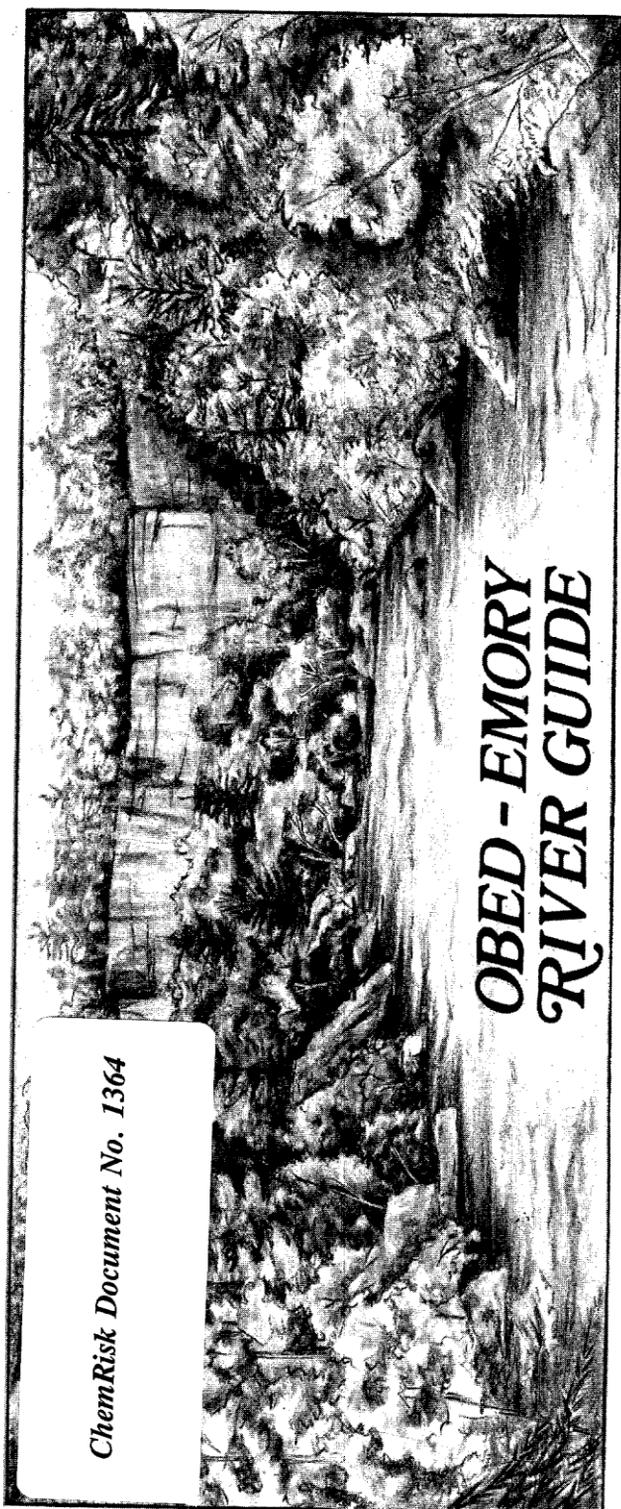
### White Creek

1. Twin Bridges—TVA  
Left Bank, upstream of bridge
2. Lavender Bridge—TVA  
Left bank, upstream of old bridge location

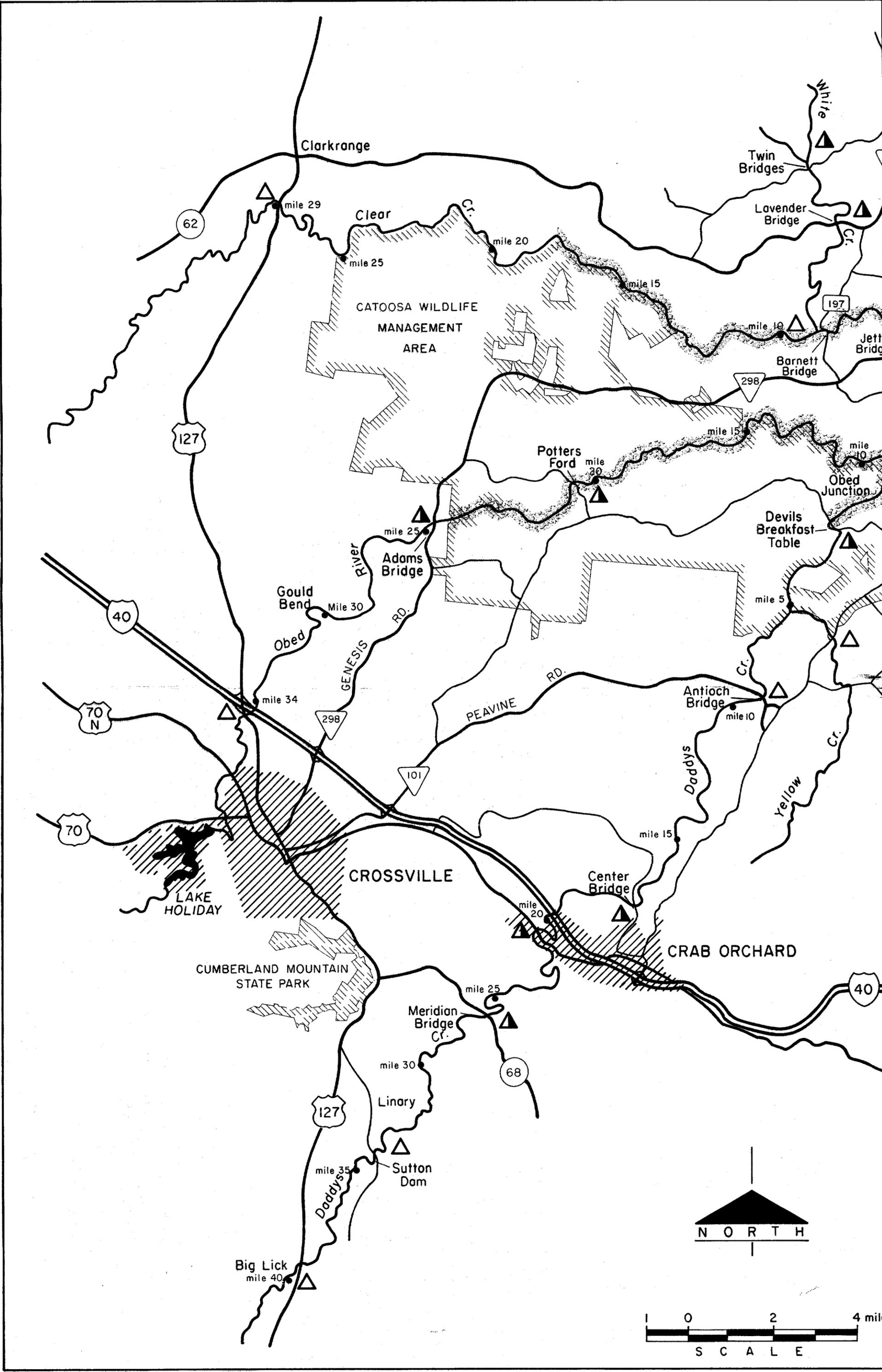
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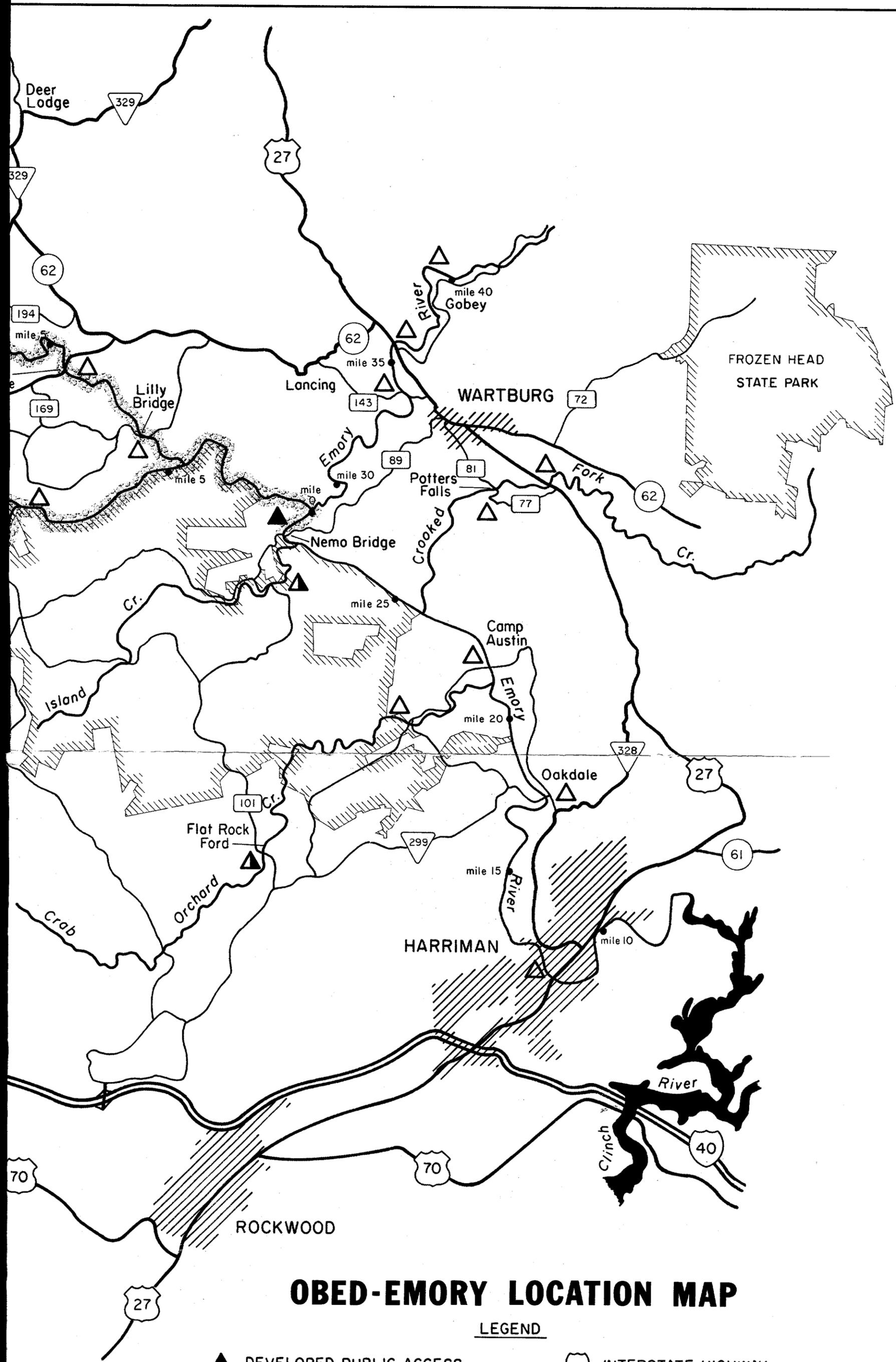
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## OBED-EMORY LOCATION MAP

### LEGEND

- |   |                           |   |                         |
|---|---------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| ▲ | DEVELOPED PUBLIC ACCESS   | ⬡ | INTERSTATE HIGHWAY      |
| ▲ | UNDEVELOPED PUBLIC ACCESS | ⬢ | U.S. HIGHWAY            |
| △ | OTHER ACCESS              | ○ | STATE PRIMARY HIGHWAY   |
| ▨ | SCENIC RIVER CORRIDOR     | ▽ | STATE SECONDARY HIGHWAY |
|   |                           | □ | COUNTY ROAD             |